

New initiative to underground overhead transmission lines.

Ofgem are proposing a new £100 million allowance for electricity transmission companies, such as National Grid, to underground existing overhead cables that lie within AONBs and National Parks to enhance the appearance of these protected landscapes. The proposed initial allowance will be spent over an eight year period from 2013.

Authority member, Peter Dixon attended a workshop held by National Grid where the new proposals were outlined and there was an opportunity for protected landscapes to discuss the proposals with the transmission company

In the east of England there are 1,910km of major transmission lines in protected landscapes, 4.5% of the national total. The £100 million would only underground between 4-10 km of this high voltage cable. However, Ofgem do have the ability to increase the allowance to line providers and therefore allow more cable to be undergrounded. There would also be funding within the scheme to underground proposed new lines within designated landscapes. This would have some bearing on proposed transmission lines from offshore energy developments. Unfortunately, under the new scheme there are no locations in the Broads eligible for the new allowance.

Members have in the past queried whether it would be possible to underground the cables that are supported on pylons in the Waveney Valley, St Olaves and Whitlingham Country Park.

These would not be eligible for this new allowance as they are classed as distribution network cables and are owned and operated by UK Power Networks.

They would be eligible for funding from an existing allowance to underground distribution network cables, but the individual cost of the above three schemes would be prohibitive.

This existing scheme is however, providing funding for the removal of 11km of overhead cable, 106 wooded poles and three steel towers that cross the Waveney valley at Barsham marshes.

The project will start next year, subject to landowner consents. It is expected to cost in the order of £1.5 million, representing over a quarter of the available £5.6 million allowance to be spent in the east of England. This scheme follows on in the footsteps of undergrounding projects at Buckenham marshes and St Benets abbey.

The Authority has responded to the consultation by OFGEM on the new allowance welcoming the initiative but highlighting the fact that the existing

allowance for distribution networks is not sufficient to cover the cost of the projects which include the removal of large pylons such as those at St Olaves.

The summary of the workshop findings can be found at <http://www.nationalgrid.com/NR/rdonlyres/D4620976-E1B1-4BD2-9551-CB5D7AAD528D/55678/>

[TalkingNetworksWorkshop8thAugust2012report.pdf](#)

Lesley Marsden, Landscape officer